

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 07311 021231Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00
ICAE-00 SY-05 MCT-02 A-01 OPR-02 SCS-06 CA-01
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
/065 W

-----045655 021237Z /53

O R 021102Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9627
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
USINT BAGHDAD
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 07311

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORS, PINS, IR
SUBJ: IMPLICATIONS OF IRAN'S RELIGIOUS UNREST

REF: TEHRAN 7265

SUMMARY: BOMBING AT ISFAHAN CONSULATE EVENING AUG. 1 APPEARS
DIRECTLY RELATED TO RELIGIOUS UNREST FOLLOWING APPREHENSION
OR KIDNAPPING OF MULLAH TAHERI. TAHERI'S DISAPPEARANCE
(EVENING JULY 31) SPARKED SUBSTANTIAL WAVE OF RIOTING IN
ISFAHAN AGU. 1 WHICH RESULTED IN POLICE FIRING INTO CROWDS
ON AT LEAST TWO KNOWN OCCASIONS. IN VIEW OF THESE INCIDENTS
AND ONSET OF RAMAZAN EVENING AUG. 3, EMBASSY AND CONSULATE
ADVISING AMERICANS TO MAINTAIN LOW PROFILE AND AVOID
CROWDED PUBLIC AND RELIGIOUS AREAS. END SUMMARY.
1. FOLLOWING COMPILED FROM NUMBER OF SOURCES BOTH OFFICIAL
AND OTHERWISE NOT ALL OF WHICH IDENTIFIED IN TEXT.
CONSULAR OFFICER MCGAFFEY IN ISFAHAN INFORMS EMBASSY
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 07311 021231Z

NEW INFORMATION AVAILABLE INDICATES MULLAH TAHERI WHO HAD
RETURNED FROM INTERNAL EXILE ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO WAS
TAKEN FROM HIS HOME EVENING OF JULY 31 BY PERSONS
UNKNOWN. HIS RELIGIOUS SUPPORTERS, SUSPECTING OFFICIAL
INVOLVEMENT, WENT ON RAMPAGE IN HOSSEINABAD AREA OF
ISFAHAN AUG. 1. EYEWITNESS REPORTS BURNING STREET
BARRICADES AT SEVERAL LOCATIONS, SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE TO

BANKS AND OTHER BUILDINGS INCLUDING SIX INCENDIARY BOMB INCIDENTS, AND POLICE FIRING INTO CROWDS. THESE ARE BELIEVED TO BE THE WORK OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS WHO ARE EITHER SUPPORTERS OF TAHERI AND AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI OR PERHAPS FANATIC FACTIONS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE DISTURBANCES. MCGAFFEY NOTES TAHERI MIGHT AS EASILY HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED BY MOSLEM FANATIC RIGHTISTS AS BY OFFICIAL SOURCES.

2. TAHERI'S SUPPORTERS ARE THOSE WHO FORMED SEVERAL DEFENSE GROUPS AGAINST OFFICIALLY INSPIRED CIVILIAN RESISTANCE GROUPS WHO ATTEMPTED TO CONTROL DEMONSTRATORS IN APRIL/MAY. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO KNOWN ACTIVITY BY EITHER CIVILIAN RESISTANCE UNITS OR OTHER VIGILANTE GROUPS IN INTERVENING MONTHS, TAHERI DISAPPEARANCE APPARENTLY WAS SPARK WHICH TRIGGERED MORE SUBSTANTIAL VIOLENCE.

3. AMERICAN CITIZEN EYEWITNESS WHO FOUND HIMSELF IN A CROWD AUG. 1 REPORTS POLICE FIRED AT THE CROWD AND ONE CHILD WAS HIT IN THE HEAD AND DIED. OTHERS MAY HAVE BEEN INJURED AND POSSIBLY KILLED AS WELL. SAME SOURCE SAW SMALL GROUPS OF POLICE CHASE SOME RIOTERS INTO SMALL ALLEYS AND RETURN AFTER SINGLE SHOT HAD BEEN FIRED. SOURCE DID NOT SEE ANYONE DEAD AS A RESULT OF THESE FORAYS BUT BELIEVES THERE IS HIGH PROBABILITY DEMONSTRATORS WERE KILLED. REPORT, NOT FULLY CONFIRMED, INDICATES AT LEAST CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEHRAN 07311 021231Z

ONE BELL HELICOPTER EMPLOYEE WAS SHOT AT ON WAY TO WORK AUG. 2. SOURCE OF SHOTS UNKNOWN (BUT BEST INFORMATION INDICATES POLICE ONLY GROUP FIRING UP TO THIS POINT).

4. EMBASSY COMMENT: RELIGIOUS UNREST FOLLOWING MOURNING CEREMONIES FOR DECEASED RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAS BEEN REPORTED SEPTELS. KHOMEINI RELIGIOUS FORCES HAVE CLEARLY USED MOURNING CEREMONIES FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES AND RESULTANT UNREST HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED TENSENESS IN COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY IN CITIES WHERE DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE OCCURRED. FACT THAT SUCH EVENTS OCCURRED SO CLOSE TO BEGINNING OF FASTING PERIOD OF RAMAZAN HAS INCREASED POTENTIAL FOR CIVILIAN VIOLENCE AND UNREST.

5. BOMBING AT ISFAHAN CONSULATE IS FIRST INCIDENT THERE ESPECIALLY DIRECTED AT AMERICANS OR AMERICAN INSTALLATIONS. FACT THAT BOMBING WAS SIMPLE PIPE BOMB AND NOT INCENDIARY DEVICE AS VIRTUALLY ALL PREVIOUS ONES IN ISFAHAN, SUGGESTS IT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN SAME GROUP. UNLESS TAHERI SUPPORTERS MAY HAVE HIT CONSULATE ALONG WITH OTHER TARGETS USING DIFFERENT TYPE OF WEAPON, EMBASSY'S BEST GUESS IS THAT CONSULATE BOMBING WAS WORK OF SMALL FANATIC FRINGE GROUP

WHICH MAY NOT HAVE PREVIOUSLY SURFACED. ALTHOUGH BOMB PRODUCED SUBSTANTIAL FRAGMENTATION, TIMING OF INCIDENT SEEMED DESIGNED TO FRIGHTEN RATHER THAN TO HURT. ADDITIONAL GURDS HAVE BEEN REQUESTED FROM IRANIAN AUTHORITIES FOR CONSULATE ISFAHAN AS WELL AS CONSULATES SHIRAZ AND TABRIZ.

6. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY HAS BEEN OR WILL BE DIRECTED AGAINST FOREIGNERS, HOWEVER, THE COMPETITION BETWEEN IRANIAN MULLAHS FOR POLITICAL/ RELIGIOUS PROMINENCE CAN HAVE THE EFFECT OF FORCING ALL

MULLAHS TO SUPPORT THEIR MORE EXTREME BRETHERN, HOWEVER LUKEWARMLY, IN ANY CIVILIAN CONFRONTATION WITH SECURITY
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PAGE 04 TEHRAN 07311 021231Z

FORCES. THIS WOULD, OVER TIME, ACTIVATE THE LATENT XENOPHOBIA IN IRANIAN RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM. RELIGIOUS DISSIDENCE IS LIKELY TO EVOLVE SUBSTANTIALLY OVER THE NEXT FIVE WEEKS, THOUGH IN WHAT DIRECTION, IT IS NOW DIFFICULT TO TELL. OVER PAST TWO WEEKS, THERE HAS BEEN GENERAL PERCEPTION THAT GOI EFFORTS TO COME TO SOME SORT OF ARRANGEMENT WITH RELIGIOUS FORCES HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE RENEWED EFFORTS IN THIS DIRECTION, BUT ALSO SOME, IF NOT SUBSTANTIAL, STIFFENING OF GOVERNMENT ATTITUDES.

7. IN VIEW OF ONSET OF RAMAZAN, AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE BEING CAUTIONED TO MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE (SEPTTEL).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN07311
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780316-0191
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197808105/aaaadkga.tel
Line Count: 150
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0e2e0358-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TEHRAN 7265
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 sep 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1555412
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IMPLICATIONS OF IRAN'S RELIGIOUS UNREST
TAGS: PORS, PINS, SHUM, IR
To: STATE DIA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0e2e0358-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014